

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 INSE-00
VO-03 SCA-01 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00
/053 W

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R 051110Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 853
INFO CINCPAC
AMCONSUL BRISBANE
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY GENEVA
AMCONGEN HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USUN 1761

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 7435

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SREF, TH
SUBJ: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH RTG REFUGEE OFFICIALS

REF: STATE 072079

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: EMBASSY OFFICERS MET WITH RTG OFFICIALS
APRIL 4. MOI UNDERSECRETARY IN CHARGE OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS,
INDICATED THAT PERMANENT PERSONNEL ARRANGEMENTS WERE
BEING MADE WITHIN THE MINISTRY REPLACING THE EXISTING
AD HOC SYSTEM OF FINANCING AND MANNING REFUGEE CENTERS.
THE MOI, ACCORDING TO THE UNDERSECRETARY, LOOKS FORWARD
TO EVENTUAL U.S.-SRV RAPPROCHEMENT AS ONE WAY OF TURNING
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OFF THE CONTINUING FLOW OF BOAT CASES. EMBASSY OFFICERS
WERE TOLD THAT THAILAND, WHILE WILLING TO FACILITATE
PROCESSING OF REFUGEES ABOARD THE LEAP DAL TO THIRD
COUNTRIES, WAS UNWILLING TO TAKE THEM BACK.
END SUMMARY.

2. TAKING THE OCCASION OF ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE LOCAL

PRESS OF THE INTENTION OF THE RTG TO SET UP A
PERMANENT REFUGEE OFFICE, CONSUL AND REFUGEE OFFICER
CALLED UPON MOI UNDERSECRETARY DAMRONG SUNTHONSARATHUN
AND COL. KAMON PRACHUABMOH FOR A TOUR D'HORIZON APRIL 4.

3. DAMRONG INDICATED THAT AFTER TWO YEARS OF WORKING WITH
BORROWED PERSONNEL AND CREDITS, PARTICULARLY DEPARTMENT OF
LOCAL ADMINISTRATION (DOLA) ASSETS, DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN
FORMALLY TO RECOGNIZE THE REFUGEE PROBLEM AS LONG TERM AND TO
ESTABLISH AN OFFICE OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS WITHIN MOI WITH PERSONNEL
AND BUDGET SPECIFICALLY EARMARKED FOR THE WORK. DAMRONG
SAID RTG EMPLOYEE EFFECTIVENESS WOULD BE IMPROVED IF THE CURRENT
AD HOC ARRANGEMENTS WERE INSTITUTIONALIZED AND MATTER OF
PERSONNEL CONCERN SUCH AS CAREER ADVANCEMENT WERE RECOGNIZED.

4. CONSUL THANKED DAMRONG FOR EXCELLENT COOPERATION RENDERED
BY MOI DURING INAUGURATION OF CONDITIONAL ENTRY PROGRAM.
CONSUL REVIEWED CONCEPT OF CE PROGRAM IN DEPTH IN ORDER TO
EXPLAIN STATUTORY NATURE OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AS WELL AS
REITERATE U.S. OBJECTIVE OF ALLEVIATING PLIGHT OF BOAT
ESCAPEES.

5. DAMRONG AND KAMON MADE CLEAR THE PRINCIPAL CONCERN OF THE
RTG WAS REMOVAL OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND WHO,
THEY SAID, POSE POLITICAL PROBLEM AS WELL AS AWAKEN
ANIMOSITIES. DAMRONG INDICATED RTG WAS LESS CONCERNED ABOUT
THE BULK OF KHMER AND LAO WHO ARE KINDRED RACES AND ALSO
ADMITTEDLY LESS LIKELY TO BE RESETTLED IN THIRD COUNTRIES.
DAMRONG NOTED THAT DURING 1976 TRIP TO HANOI, HE, ON BEHALF
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OF RTG ASKED SRV TO PERMIT REPATRIATION OF OVER 40,000 VIET-
NAMESE WHO HAD BEEN IN NORTH EAST THAILAND SINCE FIRST INDO-
CHINA WAR. MOI UNDERSECRETARY INDICATED THAT THE SRV HAD
ASKED THE THAI NOT TO PRESS THE ISSUE AT THAT TIME GIVEN
MASSIVE DISLOCATIONS WITHIN VIETNAM AS A RESULT OF THE WAR.
DAMRONG AND KAMON NEVERTHELESS INDICATED THEIR DISCOURAGEMENT
WITH FLOW OF BOAT CASES WHICH APPEAR NEVER-ENDING, AND EXPRESSED
DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE FACT THAT THIRD COUNTRIES WERE NOT
TAKING MORE BOAT CASES. COMMENT: UNHCR FIGURES IN BANGKOK IN-
DICATE THAT 68 PERCENT OF ALL BOAT CASES HAVE RECEIVED
THIRD COUNTRY ACCEPTANCE. END COMMENT. BOTH OFFICIALS SAID IT
WAS CLEAR THAT INTENTIONS OF MAJORITY OF ESCAPEES WAS NOT TO
REMAIN IN THAILAND BUT TO GO ON TO THE U.S. OR EUROPE. DAMRONG
STRESSED RTG HOPE THAT WHATEVER RELIEF WAS RENDERED BY
BY RECIPIENT COUNTRIES THAT IT CONTINUE TO BE DONE IN LOW-
KEY FASHION SO AS NOT TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER ESCAPEES. HOWEVER,
IN THE SAME BREATH, DAMRONG CONFIRMED ARRIVAL IN THE PAST
WEEK OF 8 MORE BOATS AT SONGKLA CONTAINING 121 PERSONS WHICH
UNDERScoreD FUTILITY OF THAT HOPE.

6. DAMRONG STATED HIS BELIEF FLOW OF BOAT CASES WOULD ONLY DECREASE ONCE U.S.-SRV RELATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED (WITH FAMILY REUNIFICATION AS ONE BASIS FOR RAPPROACHMENT). RTG IN MOI'S VIEW THEREFORE LOOKED FORWARD TO EARLY U.S-SRV RECONCILIATION.

7. EMBOFFS INDICATED THAT, WORKING IN CONCERT WITH UNHCR OFFICIALS, EMBASSY WOULD CONTINUE TO KEEP USG APPRISED OF LOCAL REFUGEE CONDITIONS BY DISCREETLY VISITING REFUGEE AREAS AND BY REVIEWING ALL REQUESTS FOR REFUGE. DAMRONG INDICATED HIS ACQUIESCENCE TO THIS AND EXPRESSED HIS UNDERSTANDING FOR THE LIMITS OF U.S. ABILITY TO ACCEPT REFUGEES. HE EXPRESSED RTG APPRECIATION FOR GENEROUS U.S. FINANCIAL SUPPORT. IN THIS REGARD DAMRONG SAID HE HOPED USG WOULD NOT MISINTERPRET THAI MOTIVES AS LACKING HUMANITARIANISM IN SITUATIONS SUCH AS THE CASE OF THE 26 KHMER FORCIBLY RETURNED IN NOVEMBER AND IN THE MORE RECENT CASE OF SIX PL SOLDIERS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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POLICE TO BE RETURNED TO PDRL CONTROL FOLLOWING CHARGES OF ESPIONAGE AFTER LEAVING THE CAMP AT NOGKHAI (SEPTTEL WHEN MORE DATA AVAILABLE). DAMRONG EXPRESSED APPREHENSION THAT GIVEN CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICY EXPRESSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THAT THE RTG MIGHT BE DENIED U.S. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES BECAUSE OF SUCH INCIDENTS. HE ASKED THAT THE U.S. "UNDERSTAND" THE THAI POSITION.

8. CONSUL INDICATED USG WAS CONCERNED ABOUT INVOLUNTARY REPATRIATION. KAMON REVIEWED RTG STATEMENTS ABOUT KHMER COMMUNIST ASSURANCES THAT THE 26 HAD BEEN "HAPPILY REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILITES." KAMON FINALLY AND LAMELY SOUGHT REFUGE IN RTG'S INABILITY TO VERIFY THE FACTS.

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03
SCA-01 INSE-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
DODE-00 /053 W
-----051233Z 066166 /11

R 051110Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 854
INFO CINCPAC
AMCONSUL BRISBANE
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY GENEVA
AMCONGEN HONG KONG
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AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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USUN 1762

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9. CONSUL RAISED ISSUE OF THOSE ABOARD LEAP DAL AND ASKED WHETHER RTG INTENDED TO DETERMINE WHICH INDIVIDUALS ABOARD WERE THAI CITIZENS MASQUERADING AS REFUGEES. RESPONSE WAS THAT RTG INTENDED NO ACTION WHATSOEVER WITH REGARD TO LEAP DAL EXCEPT TO ATTEMPT TO ARREST INDIVIDUALS HE DESCRIBED AS "GANGSTERS" WHO PERPETRATED FRAUD UPON SOME "UNFORTUNATE PEOPLE". KAMON INDICATED THAI CITIZEN ABOARD THE LEAP DAL WERE FREE TO RETURN TO THAILAND AT ANY TIME BUT THAT RTG WOULD NOT TAKE DIRECT STEPS TO SECURE THEIR REPATRIATION. DAMRONG INDICATED THAT IF FOREIGN EMBASSIES WERE INTERESTED IN ACCEPTING SOME OF THE PEOPLE ABOARD THE LEAP DAL, UP TO ONE MONTH PERIODS OF STAY COULD BE SECURED IN THAILAND TO ASSIST IN THEIR PROCESSING. CONSUL STATED THAT FOLLOWING DETAILED CONFIDENTIAL

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SURVEY OF THOSE ABOARD IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT SOME INDIVIDUALS MIGHT QUALIFY FOR MOVEMENT TO THE U.S. (SEPTEL).

10. COMMENT: A CONSTANT THREAD THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION WHICH UNDERSCORED OUR INTERLOCUTORS' AMBIVALENCE AND FRUSTRATION WERE COMPLAINS ABOUT THE UNHCR'S PREOCCUPATION AND PRESSURING FOR THE NEED FOR LOCAL RE-SETTLEMENT, INSTEAD OF FINDING THIRD COUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES. ON THE ONE HAND COMMENTS WERE MADE ABOUT THE UN'S LACK OF RECOGNITION OF LOCAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS INVOLVED IN GIVING LAND AND RESOURCES TO INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. ON THE OTHER HAND THE MOI OFFICIALS PLAINTIVELY COMMENTED THAT FOREIGN STATES UNDERSTANDBALLY TOOK ONLY THE MOST QUALIFIED REFUGEES "LEAVING ONLY FARMERS AND FISHERMEN." THE RTG CONTINUES TO GRAPPLE WITH THE PROBLEM OF WANTING TO ACCEPT ITS INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS REGARDS FIRST ASYLUM YET NOT WISHING TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER OUTFLOWS OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES.

HOWEVER, IT IS BECOMING CLEARER TO THE RTG THAT TWO YEARS
AFTER THE COMMUNIST DOMINATION OF INDOCHINA, THIRD COUNTRIES
ARE NOT GOING TO TAKE THE PROBLEM OFF THEIR HANDS, AND THAT
PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT, WHILE POLITICALLY UNPALATABLE, IS THE
ONLY SOLUTION FOR THE BULK OF THE REFUGEES. THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A REGULAR REFUGEE OFFICE AT LEAST RECOGNIZES THAT
HERETOFORE TABOO ISSUE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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